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THE *ACTA PILATI* IN SLAVONIC*

The present article aims at clarifying the long tradition of the Acta Pilati *in Slavonic, which is derived from two different models, Latin and Greek. Both texts were translated into Slavonic and exerted mutual influences on each other, thus creating a rich and complex literary tradition that was not only used in liturgy, but also left its imprint in literature and the arts.*

L'article vise à clarifier la longue tradition des Acta Pilati *en slave, qui est dérivée de deux traditions différentes, latine et grecque. Les deux textes ont été traduits en slave et ont exercé une influence mutuelle sur chacun, créant de ce fait une tradition littéraire riche et complexe qui a été non seulement employée dans la liturgie, mais a également laissé sa marque dans la littérature et les arts.*

The Slavic tradition of the Gospel of Nicodemus is long and complex. No other apocryphal gospel, apart from the *Dormition of the Theotokos,* was so popular in Slavic letters. The large number of manuscripts recorded for each of the works – 184 manuscripts and 167 manuscripts, respectively, according to Santos Otero[1] – deserves some preliminary remarks.

First of all, it should be noted that the list of manuscripts grouped together by Santos Otero under the heading of "Evangelium Nicodemi" does include, in fact, all texts belonging to what has been called the Cycle of Pilate, i.e., not only the translation of the Latin *Evangelium Nicodemi (EN),* or the *Acta Pilati (AP)*, which would refer to the earliest forms and to Greek and Oriental versions, or the *Descensus Christi ad Inferos (DI)*, the last thematic section of the apocryphon.[2] It also includes late recensions and versions made in

* The author would like to thank Dr. Catherine MacRobert, Dr. Ralph Cleminson and Dr. Simon Franklin for their invaluable comments in the preparation of the present article.

1. Santos Otero, Aurelio de. 1978. *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der altslavischen Apokryphen*, Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, Patristische Texte und Studien. Band II (1981) : 61-99; 161-196.

2. Izydorczyk, Zbigniew. 1997. *The Medieval "Gospel of Nicodemus": Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe*. Tempe, Arizona: Medieval &

any Slavic language almost up to the nineteenth century, the number of which, due to reasons that will be explained hereafter, could be enlarged *ad infinitum.* In the present paper, I shall focus on those texts that include the *Acta Pilati* in a linguistic form that, despite showing regional differentiations, could still be called Old Slavonic.[3]

In order to provide a picture as clear as possible of the rich tradition of the Cycle of Pilate in Slavic letters, it is imperative to clarify the classification of all these manuscripts. The first systematic listing and description of all the Slavic manuscripts containing any part of the Cycle of Pilate was made by the Spanish scholar A. de Santos Otero. Despite its possible mistakes, some of which were undoubtedly due to precarious state of the materials he had to rely on, Santos Otero's survey, which was later corrected and emended by F. Thomson[4], among others, is still our primary guide in approaching this study.

The Slavonic tradition of the Cycle of Pilate absorbed both Western and Eastern traditions, which means translations were made from both Latin and Greek originals. Together, they provide a unique case study not only of the transmission history of the main texts, whether these may be the Latin *EN* or the Greek *AP*, but also, as pointed out by Z. Izydorczyk and J-D. Dubois, "of the points of contact and the nature of interactions between Latin and Greek texts".[5]

The oldest translation of any text of the Pilate cycle into Slavonic seems to have been made from a Latin version that would have included the *AP*, the *DI* and the *Epistola Pilati ad Claudium*, in a similar layout of the text found in *codex Einsidlensis 326.* It is thus attested in two Glagolitic fragments, the Mitterburg Croat Glagolitic fragments.[6] These two Glagolitic fragments stand, according to

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Renaissance Texts & Studies.2.

3. One of the most widespread texts of the Cycle of Pilate was the combination of the *Anaphora* (Pilate's report to Rome) and the *Paradosis* (Pilate's trial and execution). These texts were probably first translated earlier than the *AP,* tentatively in Bulgaria in the tenth century (17 manuscripts) and were also combined in later Bulgarian recensions of the fourteenth century (7 mss.) These, as well as other texts of the cycle of Pilate extant in Slavonic (*Narratio Josephi ab Arimathea, Tiberii rescriptum, Narration de Martha*), will be the subjects of a future study.

4. Thomson, F.J. 1985. Apocrypha Slavica: II. *Slavonic and East European Review* 63 (1) : 73-98. See also Minczew, G. & Skowronek, M. 2006. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in the Slavic manuscript tradition. Initial observations. In *Apocrypha* 17:179-201.

5. Izydorczyk. *The Medieval "Gospel of Nicodemus":* 40.

6. HAZU Fragm. glagoliticum 32/c. s. XV, fol. I-Id. Incipit: […] *pristrašnaê midena i zatvori želězne zabij'te.* Cod. descr.: V.J. Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske Akademie, I dio* Zagreb 1969 *II dio,* Zagreb 1970 :

Grabar, closer to the original translation than Cyrillic copies.[7] The antiquity of a Glagolitic translation was also endorsed by Vaillant[8] on the base of confusion of numbers and certain linguistic features. More importantly, these two fragments belong to a larger family of translations of the above-mentioned Latin text made in all likelihood in Croatia or Dalmatia in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, probably in one of the Benedictine monasteries of the area that flourished at the time.[9] The presence of certain Moravisms should not confuse us as to the origin of the translation. This family deriving from a Latin original consists of 16 manuscripts[10], apart from the Glagolitic fragments, to which we could ascribe as well four other manuscripts in which only some chapters of the *DI* are included.[11] The various manuscripts have survived in two recensions, a Serbian and a Russian one.[12] The oldest extant manuscript of this tradition is dated to the fourteenth century

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13. Edidit: V.J. Štefanić et alii, *Hrvatska književnost srednjega vijeka,* Zagreb 1969; HAZU Fragm. glagoliticum 32/c. s. XV, fol. I-Id. Incipit: […] *(mol-) iše spas' I(su)sa. Videće ijuděi.* Cod. descr.: V.J. Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske Akademie, I dio* Zagreb 1969 *II dio,* Zagreb 1970 :13 Edidit: V.J. Štefanić et alii, *Hrvatska književnost srednjega vijeka,* Zagreb 1969.

7. Grabar, B. 1979. Über das Problem der längeren Fassung des Nikodemusevangeliums in der älteren slawischen Literatur. In *Byzance et les Slaves: Études de civilisation. Mélanges Ivan Dujčev*. Paris: Association des amis des études archéologiques des mondes byzantino-slaves et du christianisme oriental.

8. Vaillant, A. 1968. *L'Évangile de Nicodème : Texte slave et texte latin*. Genève: Librairie Droz : xiii-xiv.

9. Ibid.: xxvii-xviii.

10. RNB F. 728/1264 (f. 247ff.) and 1319 (f. 497-505), LNB Codex Stefan Komarevs'kyj, (f. 252-334), RGADA 601/1109 (non foliated), GIM F. 80370/786 (988) (f.716-727) and 798 (176) (f. 936v-951), GIM 1789 (514) (f. 435-459), RGB F. 113/189 (577) (f. 302-369), RGB F.178/924 (117) (f. 328-349v), RGB F. 200/117 (25) (glava 65), RGB F. 304/145 (1658) (f. 201-219), RGB F. 310/561 (f. 271-305v), NM Codex IX. E. 63 (f. 145v-172), ÖNB Codex Slav. 9 (f. 281-300), ÖNB Codex Slav. 15 (f. 139v-158v), ÖNB Codex Slav. 24 (f. 31-68v).

11. These are Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Slav. 76, fol. 24v-32, which includes chapters 18 to 29 of the *Descensus*. Codices Lviv, LNB, Krechovskaja Paleja, fol. 104-105, Moscow RGB 453, fol. 41v-42, and Moscow GIM Sinodal'noe sobr. 210, fol. 55v-56 contain only chapter 19 of the *DI*. Thomson. Apocrypha Slavica: II : 80.

12. By Serbian or Russian recension we do not imply the language was not Old Slavonic. The same literary and liturgical language was adapted to regional features, such as the use or not of nasal vowels, but remained in essence the same language. The Russian recension, with additional readings from the oldest Serbian text, was edited by Vaillant. *L'Évangile de Nicodème : Texte slave et texte latin*.

(Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Slav 24, fol. 31-68v) and it reflects a stronger dependence on the Glagolitic text than the Russian versions. This Slavic version, resulting from a translation from Latin, was edited by Vaillant in 1968.

The first translations from Greek of the *Acta Pilati* were not made until the thirteenth century in Bulgaria, or maybe even before, as we will see. These early manuscripts represent the earliest of the two families, the other one, more widely disseminated, being dated to a later time.

The first family of manuscripts, that we could call α, is represented by the manuscripts Mihanović 25 and Gomirje 40. According to Mošin, who catalogued both, the text in Gomirje 40 is the same as in Mihanović 25.[13] The Mihanović Homiliar has been traditionally dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century due to palaegoraphic evidence, although it does contain texts that are also found in the much earlier codex Suprasliensis.[14] The Mihanović Homiliar covers the feasts from March until August, and it is written in Raška orthography. The text of the Gospel of Nicodemus, or rather, the *Acta Pilati*, is to be found between folia 34 and 43, between two sermons of Georgii, bishop of Nicomedia, about the Cross and the Virgin and just before a Sermon of the Ps-Epiphanius, Archbishop of Alexandria about the burial of Our Lord and about Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus for the Holy Saturday.

The other manuscript is dated, according to Mošin, to the second half of the sixteenth century, and is in a miscellany of sermons of John Chrysostom and other Holy Fathers; the *AP* occur between folia 185 and 198. The text, partially edited by Novaković, is almost identical to the Mihanović one and it is also found in the same context, with the same texts before and after it, as mentioned above. Since the Gomirje 40 is a more recent copy, it could have been made from

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13. The descriptions of these two manuscripts, Mihanović 25 and Gomirje 40, can be found, respectively, in Mošin, Vladimir A. 1955. *Cirilski rukopisi Jugoslavenske akademije*. [Zagreb]: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti., p. 95-97, and Mošin, Vladimir A., Bartholomäus Kopitar, and Povijesni muzej Hrvatske. 1971. *Cirilski rukopisi u Povijesnom muzeju Hrvatske : Kopitareva zbirka slovenskih rukopisa i Cojsov cirilski odlomak u Ljubljani*. Beograd: Srpska knjizevna, p. 82-87.

14. The *Codex Suprasliensis,* dated to the eleventh century, is the largest extant Old Church Slavonic manuscript. It is a lectionary menaeum for the month of March, as well as the moveable Easter cycle. It contains twenty-four lives of saints and the same number of homilies, most of them attributed to John Chrysostom.

Mihanović 25, or both may have been made from a no longer extant manuscript.[15]

These two manuscripts present, however, some problems for their study from the textual point of view. Only Mihanović 25, whose text was edited by Speranskii in 1895,[16] has been made widely available to the scholar community in a facsimile edition.[17] Unfortunately, this manuscript contains two important lacunae, the first one covering almost the whole first chapter, and the second extending from the end of the second to the beginning of the fourth. It also exhibits other textual peculiarities at the end of chapter 14, always if compared to later manuscripts of the second, more recent textual family.

The lacunae in the Mihanović manuscript are of different nature. The part missing, for example, in the first chapter (fol. 34r, first column) is not due to a faulty manuscript, but rather to an intentional omission by the copyist. The text finishes a little bit before the end of the listing of names of the Jews present, just after Alexander, and it is immediately followed by Pilate's threat to behead them if the banners do not bend at the entry of Jesus. The omission occurs at the end of the first column, two lines before its conclusion, and there is no evidence of change of hand or ink that could justify it. Both manuscripts, Mihanović 25 and Gomirje 40, have the same omission in the same place.

The other important lacuna is certainly due to a missing page, since the Arabic numeration on the top right corner of the leaves is missing one folium, f. 35, as it was already noted by Mošin.

These two manuscripts conform, as I said before, a family that presents certain distinctive features by comparison to the other larger and later family of manuscripts. First of all, they present a clear liturgical form, already clearly stated in the incipit.

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15. The other possibility, suggested by Rémi Gounelle, was that maybe this particular pair of manuscripts, descended form the Byzantine version of the Gospel, edited by him in the *Instrumenta* of the *Series Apocryphorum* of the *Corpus Christianorum* in 2008. However, the Byzantine version had certain particularities that our pair do not reflect. The tale of the guards of the tomb (ch. 13), the final debates of the Jews (ch. 16), the arrival of the three men from Galilee (ch. 14) and the dialogue between Pilate and the Jews in ch. 4. These details of the Byzantine version are not in these two manuscripts, despite their lacunae.

16. Speranskii, M. N. 1895. *Slavianskiia apokrificheskiia evangeliia; obshchii obzor*. Moskva: T-va tip. A.I. Mamontova : 144-151.

17. Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti. Arhiv., Church Slavic III c 19., Antun Mihanović, and Rudolf Aitzetmüller. 1957. *Homiliar*. Graz : Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt.

Mihan. 25 Вь стоую̀ великꙋ соуботоу. вьспоминаниѐ стр̃ти г̃а б̃а и сп̃са нашего і̃са х̃са.

On the holy and grand Saturday. Account of the passion of the Lord the God the our Saviour the Holiest Jesus Christ

Gom. 40 Въ с(ве)тоую вѣликоую соуботꙋ вьспоминание стр(а)сти г(оспод) а в(ог)а и сп(а)са нашего і(соу)с х(рист)а.

On the holy and grand Saturday account of the passion of our Lord the God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This incipit differs from the one present in the other family, which, as we will see, describes the text as a tale or account (Написанїе, closer to the Greek Ὑπομνήματα). This family also lacks the final hymn or prayer at the end of chapter 16 in *AP*, apart from presenting differences in the use of vocabulary and small additions and abridgements throughout the text, such as the end of chapter 14. Probably based on one of the older Greek versions, rather than on the Byzantine redaction, the main distinctive feature of this family, apart from those mentioned and the vocabulary used, was the fact that the text seems to have had a primarily liturgical function, intended to be read on the Holy Saturday. It was, thus, conceived as a liturgical reading and not as a written narrative, as the manuscripts of the second family were.

The second group of manuscripts, which we might call β, present a different *incipit* and contain the final hymn. According to Thomson, there are 19 mss in this family (22 according to Santos Otero),[18] which would contain the short Greek version (still without the *Descensus*) plus the *Anaphora* and the *Paradosis*, although in Slavonic Pilate's final repentance and divine forgiveness are usually omitted. The earliest translations of this tradition would have been made in Bulgaria and not before the fourteenth century.

The *incipits* of this version vary sometimes, but none of them refers to its use in a liturgical context. As mentioned above, and following the Greek, its texts start with the term Написанїе, or alternative forms such as Списанїе (RGB, fond. 304, TSL 797) or Сказанїе (RGADA, F. 381/7 [199]), or the later and specifically Russian *Слово* (GIM FDS. Barsov Sbornik f. 215v-229v [17th c.]; GIM F.80370 [Simonov monastyr'] /59, f. 473-529 [17th c.]; GIM F. 80370 [Sinodal'noe

18. On three occasions, Santos Otero duplicated the same manuscript by attributing one number in his list to the first part, the *Acta Pilati*, and a consecutive number to the second part, i.e., the *Anaphora* or the *Paradosis,* which 'created' three extra manuscripts, namely, numbers 12, 114 and 136 of his list. This fact was described by Thomson in his review, Thomson. Apocrypha Slavica: II : 80.

SOBR.] /327 [865], f. 216v-235 [17th c.]; GIM F. UVAROV 332 [787], f. 168-198, Torzhestvennik anno 1638). The *incipits* betray from the very beginning a narrative function, rather than the liturgical one that this version had.

KPB 3473 Написанїе ѡ прѣдани господа нашего Іисоу(са) Христа еже вьспомѣноувь написа евреискъимь езыкѡмь Никодимь, иже сь благообразьнъимь Іосифомьсьнїемь погрѣбоше тѣло їисоусово, вь лѣто же.ѕі. великаго царѣ Ѳеѡдосїа прѣложи се ѡтъ евреискъıхь на грьчъкаа вьсе съı, елъıка сьдѣяше се прѣ Пилатѣ понистѣмь.

Tale of the betrayal of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as it was written by memory from the Hebrew language by Nicodeme, including the moving of the blessed Ioseph to the burial of the body of Jesus, on the year 17 of the great king Theodosius translated from the Hebrew into Greek, all those facts that took place during Pilate's ruling.

RNB 717/854 Написанїе ѡ преданїи Гд̃а нашего Іс̃а Хр̃а еже воспомянувъ евреускимъ языкомъ и философъскымъ Никодимъ, иже со благообразнымъ Иосифомъ снемь погребоша тѣло Г̃во. Въ ѕ̃і лѣто Ѳеѡдосія ц̃ря преложиша изъ еврейскіа въ греческіа, елика здѣяшася при понтѣистемъ Пилатѣ.

Tale of the betrayal of Our Lord Our Jesus Christ, as it remembered in the Hebrew language and by the philosopher Nicodeme, including the moving of the blessed Ioseph to the burial of the body of Jesus, on the year 17 of king Theodosius translated from the Hebrew into Greek, the facts that took place during Pilate's ruling.

From this point, the text is closer to the two manuscripts of the α family, but without the *lacunae,* although it sometimes presents longer, more periphrastic expressions and employs different terms (їоуде(и)скъıхь instead of жидовьскиихь, of the Jews) avoiding as well certain time references (двосьтныѥ и вьторыѥ ѡлумфиады, Gr: τὴς διακοιστὴς δευτέρας ὀλυμφιάδος), either for lack of understanding of for being deemed them unnecessary.

This version usually appears inserted among other texts of the Pilate Cycle, either the *Narratio Iosephi de Arimathea* or by the *Narratio de Martha*, probably an original Slav compilation based on the *Anaphora*, *Paradosis* and *Tiberii rescriptum.*[19]

The following is a list of the nineteen codices that preserve this version:

1. BBA, fds. Agapia-monastery in Moldavia, sbornik n.28, f. 23-56 (16th c.)
2. KPB 3473, Sbornik (16th c.), non-foliated

19. Ibid.: 81

3. RNB F.588 (Pogodin) /801, f. 138-165v (17th c.)
4. RNB F.717 (Soloveckij) /854 (old signature), f. 17-39 (16th-17th c.)
5. RGADA F.381 (Sinodal'naja tipografija) /7(199), f. 391v-411v (17th c.)
6. GIM F. Barsov Sbornik f. 215v-229v (17th c.)
7. GIM F.80370 (Simonov monastyr') /59, f. 473-529 (17th c.)
8. GIM F.80370 (Sinodal'noe sobr.) /327 (865), f. 216v-235 (17th c.)
9. GIM F. Uvarov 332 (787), f. 168-198, Torzhestvennik anno 1638
10. RGB F.37 (Bol'šakov) /66, f. 50-72 (16th c.)
11. RGB F.178 (Muzejnoe sobr.) /367, f. 131-164 (17th c.)
12. RGB F.304 (TSL) /774 (1251), f. 61-101v (anno 1531)
13. RGB F.304 (TSL) /786 (1656), f. 73v-107 (16th c.)
14. RGB F.304 (TSL) /797 (1638), f. 38v-77 (16th c.)
15. RGB F.304 (TSL) /807 (1930), f. 4-51 (17th c.)
16. HAZU Codex III.a.20 (Kukuljevic 501), Sibenicki zbor., f. 59-90v (16th c.)
17. RNB F.588 (Pogodin) /1919 and 947, (16th c.)
18. RGB F.218 (Otdel rukopisej) (797, f. 2-27 (16th c.)
19. OGNB F. V.I. Grigorovič /10(36), f. 39-59 (15th c.)[20]

The study of apocryphal gospels in Slavonic poses different challenges and offers certain advantages by comparison to other traditions. Many apocryphal gospels, such as the one object of the present article, were never indexed by the Orthodox Church. Their copying and circulation, supported by their use in liturgy, was, therefore, more common in Slavic letters throughout the Middle Ages and modern times than in other literary traditions. While not included in the biblical canon, they nevertheless enjoyed an unfailing popularity denied to them in other linguistic areas. In the case of the *Acta Pilati,* it was widely used and copied by the Old Believers in Russia and the Ukraine after the Nikonian reform in 1666, in a form that came to be known as the *Strasti Khristovy,* whose number in manuscript copies and printed books, many of them issued by

20. Apart from these, there are at least ten other manuscripts that contain a sixteenth-century Russian combination of the Greek *AP* and a Latin *DI*, as well as seventeen additional manuscripts, many of them from the eighteenth century, which are difficult to ascribe to the β family or to this combined form due to the lack of *desinits*.

rudimentary printing presses, would undoubtedly multiply the number of texts already available for study.

The aim of any research on the apocryphal Slavonic tradition, therefore, is not discovering or bringing to light a text that has remained hidden: the apocryphal gospels are widely popular and a copy of them can be bought in any shop.[21] In the case of the *Cycle of Pilate*, the profusion of manuscripts, while posing obvious problems to the task of producing critical editions of the texts, demands a clear definition of objectives. As a textual tradition that derived ultimately from two different originals (Latin and Greek), it can certainly contribute to the reconstruction of versions now lost. It is imperative, then, to impose a clear criterion and a chronological limit to our research. On the other hand, the same abundance of sources makes it almost always possible to find a textual witness to corroborate the readings. The process of translation and of adaptation of the functionality of these texts opens, however, an irreplaceable window into the understanding of religion and salvation in areas, such as Russia, where it enjoyed such long-lasting imprint in art and literature, from the late fifteenth century frescoes of the Ferapontov Monastery to Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita.*

List of abbreviations

BBA Bucarest Biblioteca Academiei

GIM Gosudarstvennyi Istoričeskii Muzei (State Historical Museum, Moscow)

HAZU Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti (Croatian Academy of Sciences, Zagreb)

KPB Karlovci Patriarchal Bibliothek (Prague)

LNB Lviv Narodnaia Biblioteka (National Library at Lviv)

NM Národni Muzeum (National Museum, Prague)

OGNB Odessa Gosudarstvennaia Naučnaia Biblioteka (State Research Library of Odessa)

ÖNB Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (National Library of Austria, Vienna)

RGADA Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents)

RGB Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka (Russian State Library, Moscow)

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21. In recent times, Mil'kov (1996 and 1999) has devoted great attention to apocryphal literature in medieval Russia, producing studies and editions of almost all texts, with translation into modern Russian.

RNB Rossiiskaia Natsional'naia Biblioteka (Russian National Library, St. Petersburg)

TSL Troitse Sergieva Lavra (Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius)

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